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WHY LINCOLN WAS NOT RENOMINATED BY ACCLAMATION

BY CLARK E. CARR

Author of "The Illini" and "Lincoln at Gettysburg"

IN the exalted situation, almost equivalent to apotheosis, in which posterity has placed Washington and Lincoln, there are few who call to mind the fact that while the great mass of the people manifested unbounded devotion to them, scarcely any other Presidents have been so much traduced and so bitterly assailed while in office.

As his first term was drawing to a close, the bitterness and malignity with which President Lincoln had been constantly assailed reached their climax. Bitter and relentless as had been the assaults of men of the great party directly opposed to him, their virulence did not exceed that of men of his own.

One of the worst malcontents was in his own cabinet. Able as he was, the Secretary of the Treasury, in his vaulting ambition to succeed his chief in the great office, could not restrain himself from such carping criticism, malevolent fault-finding, and, finally, antagonism, as to render his position intolerable both to the President and to himself.

This antagonism to President Lincoln finally materalized in an organization among Republicans to defeat him for renomination.

The Republican National Convention was called by the National Committee to meet at Baltimore on June 7, 1864. The writer was one of the delegates from Illinois in that convention. In Illinois there was scarcely the slightest opposition to the renomination of Mr. Lincoln. Every Republican was enthusiastically for him, and by ringing resolutions we were unanimously instructed to support him.

New Hampshire and Pennsylvania had led in declaring for Mr. Lincoln on the same day, January 5, 1864. The bitterness and malignity against him seemed to stimulate his friends and solidify the movements in his favor. State after State fell in line with instructions for him, and long before the National Convention met, it was apparent that Mr. Lincoln's renomination was inevitable.

But there was no cessation in the opposition. The malcontents continued everywhere and on every occasion to assail the President. The antagonism was more virulent in the State of Missouri than elsewhere. In that State the Union men, "constituting, when united, a majority of the whole people," had become involved in a "pestilential factional quarrel among themselves," culminating in two conventions, each claiming to represent the Republicans of the State. One of the factions was known as "the Radicals of Missouri" and the other as "the Conservatives of Missouri," the Radicals denouncing Lincoln, and the Conservatives supporting him.

The man to whom the opponents of the President first turned to defeat him, was Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; but just when they had become confident that he could be nominated, his own State, Ohio, declared for Lincoln, and Mr. Chase was compelled to withdraw. The attention of the Radicals then turned to John C. Frémont. Finally becoming convinced that the renomination of Lincoln at Baltimore was

inevitable, the malcontents throughout the country called a convention at Cleveland to nominate a third candidate, and launch a third party, in the hope of drawing away from the President sufficient votes to defeat him. They nominated John C. Frémont for President and John Cochrane for Vice-President, christening the new party the "Radical Democracy."

Denunciation of President Lincoln was the chief occupation of the Cleveland Convention.

Wendell Phillips, "The stormy petrel of all our political disturbances," wrote a letter predicting "the direst results from four more years of Lincoln's administration." This letter, "full of the virulent unreason which distinguished most of the attempts of this matchless orator to apply his mind to the practical affairs of life," was read in the convention. He said, among other things: "The administration I regard as a civil and military failure, and its avowed policy ruinous to the North. If Mr. Lincoln is reëlected, I do not expect to see the Union reconstructed in my day, except upon terms more disastrous to liberty than ever disunion would be."

Among those who wrote and spoke in favor of the movement was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, which caused Samuel Bowles to declare that the convention was composed of "the gentler sex of both genders."

Horace Greeley thundered against the renomination of Lincoln in the columns of the New York "Tribune," and wrote an article over his own signature against him in the New York "Independent." A "secret circular" was sent out to members of Congress and others by Senator Pomeroy of Kansas. The politicians, a majority of both houses of Congress, and the great leaders of the press in the great cities were not favorable to Mr. Lincoln's reëlection. Among the few exceptions one was so conspicuous and able a supporter of Mr. Lincoln as not to be forgotten by us old-timers of Illinois—Joseph Medill, of the "Chicago Tribune."

A prominent country editor of Pennsylvania who favored Mr. Lincoln's reëlection called upon the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, his member of Congress, and asked to be presented to some one who favored Mr. Lincoln's reëlection. Mr. Stevens took him to the Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, a member of the house from Chicago, and, introducing his friend, said: "Here is a man who wants to find a Lincoln member of Congress. You are the only one I know, and I have come over to introduce my friend to you."

In company with several other members of our Illinois delegation, I took the Old Pittsburg and Fort Wayne Railway on the journey to Baltimore. At Fort Wayne we were joined by delegations from other States, among whom chanced to be a number of the delegates of the Conservative Convention of Missouri, headed by Judge Samuel M. Breckenridge, a very able and influential Republican of that State. He and the other Conservatives at once raised the all-important question, to them, of which delegation from Missouri should be seated in the convention. Illinois being President Lincoln's own State, there was a general feeling that our delegation would in a great degree represent him, and that our action would have great influence in the convention. It was, therefore, a matter of supreme moment to the two rival delegations from Missouri as to which Illinois would favor.

Judge Breckenridge presented to us the claims of the Conservatives in the strongest possible light. He showed that, in all the turmoil and conflict during the four years of Mr. Lincoln's administration the Conservatives, headed by the Blairs, had stood by and supported the President, while the Radicals, headed by Frémont, were always denouncing him, and throwing stumbling blocks in his way; that the Conservatives had, in their State convention, adopted the same resolutions (instructing for Lincoln), that had been passed by our Illinois convention, which had appointed us, while the radicals had denounced Lincoln, and had instructed their delegates to vote for the nomination of General Grant.

To say that we were convinced that Judge Breckenridge was right, and that we ought to favor his delegation, is putting our decision mildly. We became enthusiastic supporters of the Conservatives. Knowing that every other delegation was favorable to Mr. Lincoln, it was apparent that if we admitted the Conservatives, he would have every vote

in the convention and be nominated by acclamation.

Imbued with these sentiments, we arrived in Baltimore. I was then young and impetuous and took great interest in the matter, impressing upon others, to the best of my ability, the importance and necessity of our supporting the Conservatives. The only person, as I remember, who did not join in with this movement was the chairman of our delegation, Mr. Burton C. Cook. He did not oppose us in our efforts, but intimated that we had better await events before committing ourselves too strongly. I have always since believed that Mr. Cook, whose relations with the President were close, had some intimations of what was in the wind.

Our delegation was quartered at Barnum's Hotel, where a small parlor was reserved for the meetings of the Illinois delegation. On the day before the convention opened, we were called together by Mr. Cook to consider and act upon matters relating to the organization, the most important of which was as to our position on the question of which delegation from Missouri we would favor.

With scarcely an exception every Illinois delegate favored the Conservatives, and we went into that conference without any question that we should so declare, and we felt as certain that the delegates from other States would endorse our action.

Just as we were about to vote upon the question, a young man arose in a corner of the room and modestly asked to be heard for a moment. He said that he only wished to say a word—that he wanted "to give his own opinion, and not that of any one else," repeating that he only spoke for himself. Then he told us that, after all, under all the circumstances, he thought that Illinois had better favor the admission of the delegates of the Radical convention of Missouri. That was all. There was perfect silence for a few moments after he closed. One delegate asked him to give a reason for taking such a position. This he said he could not do; but reiterated his statement as to how *he* thought we should act.

A number of our delegates knew the young gentleman when he first appeared. By this time, every delegate knew who he was. It was John G. Nicolay, President Lincoln's private secretary. Earnest as he was in the declaration that he was speaking only for himself, we soon realized that through his lips Abraham Lincoln was speaking to us.

We at once voted in favor of seating the Radicals. Other delegations followed, and they were seated.

The result was that when the time came for the nomination in the great convention, although a motion was made and strenuously urged to that effect, it was impossible to renominate Mr. Lincoln by acclamation, and, upon the roll being called, Mr. Lincoln received every vote but that of Missouri. Mr. Lincoln received 484 votes. Missouri gave her 22 votes to General Grant; but, before the vote was announced, changed her vote to Lincoln, thus, although not by acclamation, Mr. Lincoln was unanimously renominated.

It did not take very long for us to see the wisdom of admitting the Radicals to the convention. Had they not been admitted, the dissatisfied Republicans who wanted another candidate would have at once taken the position that they were unrecognized, and that the doors of admission to the Republican party were shut against them. All those Republicans who preferred another candidate could have said, with some plausibility, that ours was a mere Lincoln party, instead of being the Republican party. When we had admitted this Radical delegation upon an equality with all other delegates, and had given them the right to be heard, had given them their day in court, they were, like us, committed to the action of the convention and its candidates, and, as loyal Republicans, estopped from casting their fortunes with the third party that was already in the field.

I am not of the opinion, nor have I ever been, that Mr. Lincoln could at that time, under any circumstances, have been defeated; but with General McClellan, who was sure to be nominated by the Democrats, in the field, the proper and wise thing for Republicans to do was to bring together all the elements of the Republican party—including the impracticables, the Pharisees, the better-than-thou declaimers, the long-haired men and the short-haired women—and continue to prosecute the war with vigor until the last enemy should lay down his arms.

Mr. Lincoln was so great and wise as to see all this. A less sagacious man would, no doubt, for the bauble of a nomination by acclamation, have imperilled his own success and that of the party and the country. In the only way possible, without directly taking part in the management of the proceedings of the convention, he quietly indicated his views to the delegates from his own State, and through them to the whole great convention.

The result was that by this action an open door was left for all Republicans of every State, however disaffected, to come back and take their places in the party. The boasted third party was left stranded, without any following worthy of being considered. Six weeks before the election, its candidates for President and Vice-President Frémont and Cochrane, withdrew from the field, and thereafter there was no third party.

Mr. Lincoln carried against General McClellan every electoral vote except those of New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky, and his majority in the popular vote was nearly half a million—greater than had ever before been received by a Presidential candidate.

A LINCOLN SOUVENIR IN THE SOUTH

A LETTER FROM ABRAHAM LINCOLN TO ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, WHICH HANGS ON THE WALLS OF A SOUTHERN HOME

BY MYRTA LOCKETT AVARY

VISITING not long ago at the home of my friend Dr. Robert Grier Stephens of Atlanta, Georgia, I noticed on the wall of his favorite room a framed letter. In one corner of the frame was also a photograph of the size usual before "cabinets" came in vogue. The photograph bore the name of Abraham Lincoln in his own handwriting; the letter, also in Mr. Lincoln's handwriting, read thus:

Executive Mansion
Washington, Feb. 10, 1865

HON. A. H. STEPHENS

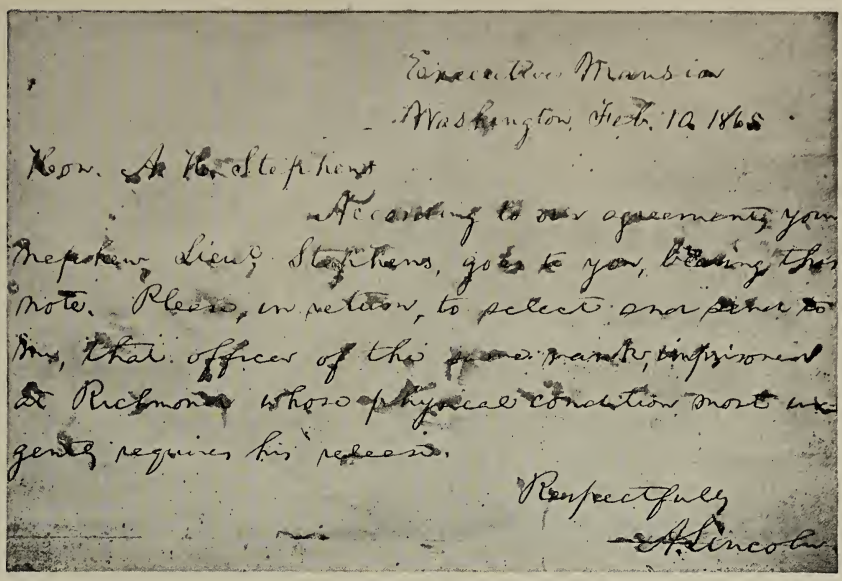
According to our agreement your nephew, Lieut. Stephens, goes to you, bearing this note. Please, in return, to select and send me, that officer of the same rank, imprisoned at Richmond, whose physical condition most urgently requires his release.

Respectfully
A. Lincoln.

I asked the history of the letter and the photograph, and I will try to repeat it in the simple, unstudied phrases in which I heard it from the niece of Alexander H Stephens, the daughter of him who is mentioned in the letter as "Lieut. Stephens."

The Hampton Roads Peace Conference of 1865, at which Mr. Stephens, Judge J. A. Campbell, and Mr. R. M. T. Hunter met Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward in an effort to establish peace between the North and South, and so to put an end to bloodshed, had ended in failure. Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Stephens had met in 1847, when both were members of Congress, and something very like warm personal friendship had developed between them; this was strengthened at Hampton Roads. When they came to say good-by, the President of the United States remarked with feeling to the Vice-President of the Confederacy:

"Well, Stephens, there has been



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Respectfully
A. Lincoln

FACSIMILE OF LINCOLN'S LETTER TO ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS

nothing we could do for our country. Is there anything I can do for you personally?"

"Nothing." Then the Vice-President's pale face brightened. "Unless you can send me my nephew, who has been for twenty months a prisoner on Johnson's Island."

Mr. Lincoln's face also brightened. "I shall be glad to do it. Let me have his name." He took the name down in his note-book.

When he returned to Washington, he telegraphed to Johnson's Island, directing that Lieut. Stephens be put on his parole, with orders to report at once to President Lincoln in Washington.

An officer came into the prison and called out:

"Lieut. John A. Stephens of Georgia!"

The lieutenant had no idea what was wanted of him; he thought he was being called out to be shot. He had been captured at the siege of Vicksburg, and had been imprisoned five months in New Orleans, and then carried to Johnson's Island.

When he reported at headquarters, he was told that he was to report at once to President Lincoln. So he was driven across the ice on Lake Erie in a sleigh twenty miles to Sandusky, and went on to Washington.

There at once he sought the President, and, having sent in his name, he was immediately ushered into Mr. Lincoln's presence. He found the President sitting on a table in a half-reclining position, and talking with Secretary Seward. Mr. Lincoln rose, shook his hand very cordially, and said:

"I saw your uncle Hon. Alexander H. Stephens recently at Hampton Roads."

Lieutenant Stephens had not heard of the Peace Conference, and this was his first direct news of his family since his imprisonment. President Lincoln continued:

"I told your uncle I would send you to him, Lieutenant."

Naturally, the lieutenant was deeply moved and grateful.

"You have the freedom of the city," Mr. Lincoln continued, "as long as you please to remain here. When you want to go home, let me know, and I will pass you through the lines."

The lieutenant's appreciation and joy can be imagined. Mr. Lincoln talked on pleasantly, telling him of the Hampton Roads Conference, asking him questions, and making the hour a memorable one in many ways.

The lieutenant remained in Washington about two weeks. Many old friends entertained him, and he was in a state of

mind and body to set value on such a show of good will.

He recovered his strength rapidly, and when he went to Mr. Lincoln and told him he was ready to go to Richmond, Mr. Lincoln gave him the letter above quoted and a pass through the Federal lines, and then handed him his photograph, saying:

"You had better take that along. It is considered quite a curiosity down your way, I believe."

Lieutenant Stephens went on to Richmond, reporting for duty, and though privileged to make a visit to his relatives in Georgia, and longing to see them, proceeded to West Virginia, where he served on the staff of General Gordon. Of course he had been duly exchanged, the Federal officer who had been released going North, carrying with him memories of kindnesses and courtesy shown him in Richmond.

It is pleasant to tell tales like this about war-times—tales which show that the spirit of war cannot kill in human hearts the spirit of loving-kindness, and which make us hope that this spirit of loving-kindness will sometime be too strong altogether for the spirit of war.

POSSESSION

BY EDMUND VANCE COOKE

"NAY," murmured the wife,
"Love is no longer your life.

Seldom, too seldom, now
You breathe life into your vow.

Rarely the love-words start
Hot from the core of your heart.

Seldom the song you once sung
Trembles and thrills on your tongue."

Answered the husband, "Look,
My love, at your favorite book.

Do you remember how first
You read with a rapturous burst?

Do you remember how, then,
You marked and re-marked it again,

Scribbling some marginal note,
Or pausing to praise it and quote?

Now, though you keep it close by,
Under your hand and your eye,

Rarely you praise it the same,
Rarely you cite and exclaim,

For it is needless. 'T is part
Of your own mind and your heart.

Such, too, the history of
My book—our Volume of Love."